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ABSTRACT

Graduate students who want to teach at a community college are neither prepared nor qualified for the job since specialized discipline-based doctorate programs offer graduates little to help them find a job as community college instructors. A significant percentage of the professoriate in higher education is employed in community college education, and community colleges will be hiring many new part-time faculty to fill vacancies caused by retirement. Graduate programs in general, and speech communication programs in particular, have not satisfied the demands of the community college markets: the community college professoriate has been overlooked or dismissed by some colleagues in four-year colleges; community colleges will continue to hire home-grown faculty because graduate institutions have been unresponsive; and community colleges will continue to emphasize instruction as the basis for hiring. Discipline-based graduate programs should allow and encourage students to consider careers as two-year college faculty and to earn credit for field experience, universities should work with community colleges to create faculty exchange programs, and graduate programs should recruit community college faculty in addition to traditional graduate students. In 1988, George Mason University created a doctoral program in community college teaching, but the program is not available for faculty teaching speech communication. (RS)

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The Emerging Professoriate in Community Colleges

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for
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In 1989, Don Boileau (George Mason University) and I presented a paper entitled "Lecturing in the Community College Classroom: Research and Reactions" at the Eastern Communication Association Convention. As a preface to that paper, we advanced several claims that are relevant to understanding The Emerging Professoriate in Community Colleges.

> Community college teachers often find that existing doctoral programs are of little use or interest. A traditional discipline-based Ph.D. is so specialized that the graduates of such programs find little applicability to their profession as community college instructors. Community college doctorates offered by schools of education often are designed to train prospective and practicing administrators. For those who want to teach at a community college, neither the discipline-based nor the educational doctorate is adequate.

Unfortunately, little has changed since 1989. Graduate students who want to teach at a community college are neither prepared nor qualified for the job. Even though community colleges now enroll over half of all undergraduates in higher education, it is often difficult for students pursuing a traditional graduate school education to find a job in this arena of higher education.

In order to better understand this state of affairs, a brief analysis of the community college professoriate and some recommendations for graduate educators interested in preparing students for professions in two-year colleges are presented.

First, it is essential to acknowledge three factors that affect the way in which the professoriate has emerged and will continue to emerge at community colleges.

1. Given that over half of all undergraduates are enrolled in community colleges, a significant percent of the professoriate in higher education is employed in community college education.

2. Given that significant numbers of experienced community college faculty members will retire by the turn of the century, community colleges will be hiring many new full- and part-time faculty to fill instructional vacancies.

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3. Given that most community colleges rely on part-time faculty members to teach a significant number of classes, the natural, and often most appropriate, source for future faculty members lies within the ranks of adjunct faculty.

As a result of the above factors, the following scenario is unfolding at two-year colleges. Those of us who work at community colleges will continue to teach the majority of undergraduates in higher education and the majority of college students taking basic courses in speech communication and media. Because most of us have been teaching at two-year colleges for most of our career, our approaching retirements will leave faculty shortages at many of our institutions. And, because our colleges will be looking for new faculty members who understand, respect, and have experience in community college education, we will continue to hire faculty from among the ranks of proven part-time instructors rather than from pools of applicants fresh out of graduate schools.

It is my opinion that, in the future, the job openings in community colleges will grow while the chances of a new master's degree or Ph.D. and getting one of those jobs will diminish. In order to understand why graduate programs, in general, and speech communication programs, in particular, have not satisfied the demands of the community college market, it is necessary to understand at three additional factors.

1. Despite the title of this convention program, we should not be looking forward to an Emerging Professoriate in Community Colleges. The fact is, **We Have Emerged**--and have been emerging for decades. The fact that we have been overlooked and even dismissed by some of our colleagues in four-year colleges does not bode well for finding a common and mutually-beneficial answer to the question: Who will teach speech communication in community colleges in the twenty-first century?

2. Community colleges will continue to hire home-grown faculty because graduate institutions have been unresponsive to their needs and, even worse, dismissive of the community college's instructional mission. How many graduate programs are willing or able to prepare students who can teach 15 hours a semester, with as many as four preparations, in addition to assuming responsibilities in co-curricular activities or specialized curriculum development?

3. Community colleges will continue to emphasize instruction as the basis for hiring and faculty advancement and, as a result, will not view a graduate degree in a narrow, specialized area as an asset. As a result, community college professionals will not come straight from research-based graduate programs and, unfortunately, will continue to

be denied first-class citizenship by a profession that emphasizes publishable research and scholarship as the currency of value.

Although the above analysis is unsettling, the situation is not without hope or remedy--assuming that graduate schools are even interested in the "emerging" professoriate at community colleges. Graduate programs can help meet the staffing needs of community colleges if they combine attitudinal changes with changes in graduate school curricula. If, however, they wait even five years to consider or implement change, the community college employment market will pass them by.

The following recommendations for graduate school education are critical from the perspective of a community college educator. They may be, however, quite unacceptable from the perspective of a traditional graduate program.

1. Discipline-based graduate programs should allow and encourage students interested in careers as two-year college faculty to take courses in higher and community college education. These courses should not, necessarily, be taught by the president of a local community college or a university professor but by a master community college teacher or a community college's instructional dean with master teaching credentials.

2. Graduate programs should allow and encourage students to earn graduate credit for community college field experience. Such experiences should not be modeled on secondary school practice teaching but should include exposure to all aspects of community college education.

3. Universities should work with local community colleges to create faculty exchange programs and graduate student apprenticeships. The interests of two- and four-year college faculty and graduate students may be best served by changing places in order to understand the special needs and opportunities in community college education.

4. Graduate program faculty interested in instructional communication/communication education research should form partnerships with community college faculty in order to expand the scope of research while finding out more about the nature and needs of community college students.

5. In addition to traditional, full-time graduate students, graduate schools should recruit community college faculty for their programs with the proviso that the special needs of these faculty be respected and accommodated. Residency rules should be modified; community college faculty expertise should be tapped; alternative requirements should

be developed. Community college faculty should be welcomed to graduate programs as colleagues.

The above graduate program recommendations are not such stuff as dreams are made on. In fact, there is a graduate program that contains many of the above features. In 1988, George Mason University created the Center for Community College Education and a Doctorate in Arts in Community College Teaching. Unlike other graduate level community college programs, the George Mason program emphasizes the art and craft of teaching.

George Mason University's doctoral program has four components. The first is discipline-based. Each graduate student must take at least 24 hours in an appropriate academic discipline. In this way, graduate students update and advance their competencies in a field of study. A second component is a series of core courses focusing on educational issues and skills relevant to community college teaching--critical thinking, adult education, writing across the curriculum, and communication in the community college classroom. The third component is an internship experience. The doctoral candidate with limited teaching experience is given the opportunity to work or teach in a community college. The experienced community college instructor is encouraged to find a specialized community college or industry-based project. The fourth component is a final graduate project or dissertation based on the doctoral student's teaching area or academic research interest.

Unfortunately, the above doctoral program is not available for faculty teaching speech communication because George Mason University does not have a doctoral program in the discipline. The model, however, is unique and successfully meets the needs of community college faculty in several disciplines. At the same time, it does not abandon many of the more traditional graduate school requirements. Nevertheless, George Mason University's doctorate has limitations. Many senior faculty members still want nothing to do with educating community college instructors at the graduate level. The degree is only available for faculty teaching in certain academic disciplines. Political machinations have limited the size of the doctoral program because it is seen as threatening traditional graduate education programs at other Virginia universities. These problems, however, take nothing away from the model or intent of the program.

Community colleges will continue to flourish and continue to find excellent faculty members from among their part-time instructors if graduate programs fail to recognize and serve the emerging professoriate in community colleges. Opportunity knocks on the doors of graduate schools. On behalf of their own graduate students, they should open that door to the tenacious faculty who are teaching or want to teach at our nation's open-door community colleges.